



February 11, 2005

Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senate
433 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cornyn and Leahy:

We write in support of the Openness Promotes Effectiveness in our National Government (OPEN Government) Act of 2005.

In order to increase both government accountability and public awareness, the public has the right to know about information collected, disseminated and maintained by the government. The OPEN Government Act of 2005 closes many loopholes left open by the current Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and takes advantage of the Internet to more efficiently disseminate public information.

The Internet is an ideal medium for increasing and streamlining public access to government information. Through blogs, and audio and video webcasts, the Internet has facilitated the rise of several independent media outlets. By including Internet publications as part of the prior publication history to be considered when making a determination of a requester's news media status, the OPEN Government Act recognizes the legitimacy of these outlets and in doing so, removes a financial hurdle for many smaller media entities.

By creating a system allowing FOIA requestors to track requests, the Act takes advantage of the efficiency of the Internet in providing a layer of accountability to the FOIA request process.

Finally, requiring the Comptroller General to report on the implementation of the Critical Infrastructure Information Act provides a real way to bring oversight to industry's voluntary efforts to help protect the nation's critical infrastructure.

We commend you on your leadership on this and other open government issues and we look forward to continue to work with you and your colleagues in the future on this important legislation and other issues.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Schwartz".

Ari Schwartz
Associate Director
Center for Democracy & Technology